4-12-79

STANDARD-TIMES, New Bedford, MA - Apr. 12, 1979 CR: B. Greenwood

Fishermen land with tale of possible close encounter

By Jack Stewardson

Neither Francisco Marreiros nor Manuel Pateiro is quite sure what they saw out there on the fishing grounds earlier this week, but they wonder whether they had a "close encounter" with a UFO.

The two New Bedford fishermen were on the bridge of the trawler Christina and Sandra Tuesday night when they saw a bright, circular flying object fixed stationary above the water ahead of them.

Before they finally turned their vessel away from the object about five minutes later, they said its flashing lights changed color — first from white to green and then to redish orange — and appeared to have an antenna.

Both fishermen talked to The Standard-Times about their experience through an Portuguese interpreter this morning as the Christina and Sandra unloaded its catch at the Pilgrim Fish Co.

Neither stated clearly how close the object came to their approaching vessel, nor how high the object was above the water. However, both indicated lights from the object flashed down from the sky

According to Marreiros, owner and skipper of the 78 foot vessel, the encounter also disabled the vessel's Loran system for about 15 minutes after the experience and the trawler was also unable to pick up the object on the vessel's radar system throughout the time.

"I didn't appreciate seeing that thing," Marreiros said through the interpreter. "I am wondering now if it was a flying saucer, what would have happened if we had stayed."

The trawler owner said it had been raining for about 10 minutes before the crew first noticed the object. Marreiros said he first brought it to the attention of Pateiro, who was on the bridge with him.

He estimated the vessel's position was around 60 miles east of the Nantucket Lightship, around the 3200, 6250 Loran position lines. It was around 11:30 at night.

Pateiro, who drew a sketch of the sighting, said the object was about the size of the Christina and Sandra, and stood fixed in the sky at all times.

Marreiros described the flashing beacons much like the flashing dome of a police car.

"Something normal it wasn't," said Marreiros.

"We were steaming, just sailing toward it, and it was there," said Pateiro. "As we were navigating, it started changing colors."

"We turned away," Marreiros said.

Both men were at a loss to identify what they might have seen. They agreed that they had never seen anything like it before.

A spokesman for the Coast Guard 1st District headquarters in Boston indicated that "very few" UFO reports have been filed with the Coast Guard in the past. They said there have been no recent reports of UFO sightings. The Air Force usually investigates such incidents, they noted.